



Miami-Dade County Board of County Commissioners

Office of the Commission Auditor

Legislative Analysis

**Community Outreach, Safety and Healthcare
Administration Committee**

Wednesday, February 15, 2006
2:00 PM
Commission Chamber

Charles Anderson, CPA
Commission Auditor

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Legislative Analysis

**Community Outreach, Safety & Healthcare Committee
Meeting Agenda**

Wednesday, February 15, 2006

Written analyses for the below listed items are attached for your consideration in this Legislative Analysis.

Item Number(s)

3(G)

Additional information is provided for the following item(s)

2(D)	2(K)
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If you require further analysis of these or any other agenda items, please contact Guillermo Cuadra, Chief Legislative Analyst, at (305) 375-5469.

Acknowledgements--Analyses prepared by:
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LEGISLATIVE ANALYSIS

RESOLUTION APPROVING ADMINISTRATIVE ORDER 4-123 RELATED TO MIAMI-DADE COUNTY FIRE DEPARTMENT.

Miami-Dade Fire Rescue Department

I. SUMMARY

This resolution would create Administrative Order 4-123, pertaining to the Miami-Dade Fire Department fire prevention fee schedule. This administrative order includes changes to the fire prevention fee schedule that were approved by the Board of County Commissioners as part of the FY 2003-04 budget ordinance.

II. PRESENT SITUATION

Currently fees are charged by the Fire Department for fire life safety inspections, plans review and the establishment of approved emergency vehicle zones. The current fee schedule includes assessments for temporary certificate of occupancy inspections, up front inspections, and inspections on new buildings and additions, among other things. Section 14-53 of the Miami-Dade County Code states that funds collected from these fees are to be used exclusively for fire prevention activities. Every year, the Miami-Dade Fire Chief is tasked with reviewing all fees and recommending any necessary changes to the County Manager.

Following the abolishment of the Miami-Dade Fire Board in 2002, the Board of County Commissioners approved changes to the fire prevention fee schedule as part of the FY 2003-04 budget ordinance. However, the revisions were not incorporated into the Administrative Orders governing the fee schedule.

III. POLICY CHANGE AND IMPLICATION

This administrative order supersedes previous administration orders 4-45 and 4-54 pertaining to the fire prevention fee, and includes the revisions adopted by the Board of County Commissioners as part of the 2003-04 budget ordinance.

IV. ECONOMIC IMPACT

This item does not adopt any new fees.

V. COMMENTS AND QUESTIONS

- **Why wasn't this done sooner?**

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

<u>Item#</u>	<u>Subject Matter</u>	<u>Comments/Questions</u>
2(D)	Resolution opposing the sale of the Atari video game <i>Getting Up: Content Under Pressure</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Additional information is forthcoming, prior to the full BCC hearing it.• Attachment 1: Urban Scrawl: With His Graffiti –Themed Video Game, Clothing Designer Marc Ecko Tags a New Label (<i>Washington Post</i>, February 13, 2006)• Attachment 2: Graffiti Facts provided by Team Metro’s site on miamidade.gov.
2(K)	Renaming the Miami-Dade Police Department Headquarters for Fred Taylor, former police director.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Fred Taylor joined the Metro-Dade police department in 1962 as a patrolman in the central district. From 1972-79 he served as captain in charge of the robbery and sexual battery unit, among other assignments. He was then appointed division chief from 1979-83, in charge of budget, planning and personnel. He served as division chief from 1983-86 in charge of rank-and-file officers.• In 1986, following the retirement of Police Director Bobby L. Jones, he was appointed director of police department.• Upon retiring from the top post in 1997, then-Metro Commissioner Bruce Kaplan hailed him as “the best police director in the entire U.S.”• Taylor was born in Miami on Jan. 13, 1938, and received a bachelor’s degree from Biscayne College in 1973, and his master’s in public administration from Florida International University in 1974.

Urban Scrawl

With His Graffiti-Themed Video Game, Clothing Designer Marc Ecko Tags a New Label

By Jose Antonio Vargas
Washington Post Staff Writer
Monday, February 13, 2006; C01

NEW YORK Last summer, the celebrated urban-wear designer Marc Ecko wanted to throw a block party to promote his new video game. The problem? "Getting Up," in stores this week, is all about graffiti.

Local pols were upset.

Peter Vallone Jr., a Queens councilman, led the outcry, asking the city to revoke the permit for a bash that would allow graffiti artists -- or "graffiti vandals," as Vallone calls them -- to strut their stuff on 48-foot-long replicas of subway cars that ran in New York in the '80s. The event, Vallone argued, would encourage vandalism. Mayor Michael Bloomberg agreed, noting that "graffiti is just one of those things that destroys our quality of life." Things got ugly. The city revoked the soiree's permit; Ecko sued the city; lofty talk about censorship and freedom of expression was tossed around.

Then Judge Jed Rakoff of the U.S. District Court in Manhattan ruled in favor of Ecko. In his decision, Rakoff wrote: "By the same token, presumably, a street performance of 'Hamlet' would be tantamount to encouraging revenge murder. . . . As for a street performance of 'Oedipus Rex,' don't even think about it."

A stalwart aficionado of graffiti -- it's always been a part of his designs -- Ecko is grinning about the whole episode now.

"That was fun times, fun times," says the 33-year-old, who started Ecko Unltd. in 1993 and sits as the youngest member of the Council of Fashion Designers of America. As ever, he's wearing a baggy black shirt, comfy Nike Dunks, and his baseball-cap slightly askew. "People gotta understand that a graffiti tag in the virtual world doesn't make one pop up in the real world. Answer honestly: If 'Getting Up' was a film or a book, would people all of a sudden say, 'Oh my goodness, there is going to be a graffiti epidemic!'"

So why is the king of a multimillion-dollar empire -- with T-shirts, sweaters, blazers, caps, shoes, leather wear, underwear, you name it, sold in more than 5,000 stores in the United States, including JC Penney and Bloomingdale's -- breaking into the video game business?

"I grew up with games, yo. Everybody did. When you boil down this sweat shirt that I sell, or this track jacket, or this game, and you boil it down to its essence and you get it in a little beaker, it's the same thing. The same thing. It's like, it's like, it's cool. It's relevant from a lifestyle point of view," says Ecko, taking off his cap for a second, then putting it back on -- slightly to the side, of course. "If you're youth-culture minded, if you're into hip-hop culture, skateboarding culture, it's that, it's that essence, it's that *chi*, it's that thing that defines us."

* * *

With his boyish face, beefy build and don't-mess-with-me demeanor, Ecko could easily pass for A.J. Soprano's big brother. Then he cracks a smile. He ain't tough. He just looks it. Snacking on a green apple, lounging in his second floor office here in Chelsea, he gives a bit of a graffiti lesson:

Call it street art or graf art, whatever, the graffiti style as we know it in America -- the stylized "tag" (a signature), the "throw-up" (a more intricate work), the "piece" (short for the masterpiece, a large, multi-color design) -- was born in Philly in the late 1960s, says Ecko, though some argue that it was in the 1970s in New York, especially in the Bronx, where it really caught on. Many of the graf artists in the Bronx were also DJs, Ecko explains, and graffiti was the visual aspect of their evolving music, which was hip-hop.

Those were the glory days, the late '60s to the late '80s, a time when a graf artist could hang out on an elevated platform and take pride in seeing his work sprayed all over passing subway cars, says Jeff Ferrell, a professor in the sociology department of Texas Christian University and one of the leading graf historians in the country.

The city finally managed, about 25 years ago, to clean the cars and keep them clean. And in the mid-'90s, Rudy Giuliani, mayor of New York at the time, created the Mayor's Anti-Graffiti Task Force and launched a crusade to eradicate graffiti from other municipal surfaces. "Graffiti creates an impression of disorder and of lawlessness," he said in a speech. "A city tainted by vandalism invites more vandalism and more serious crime because it sends the message that the city doesn't care and isn't paying attention."

Still, graffiti is all around us, and not all of it is vandalism. In the past few years, Nike, McDonald's, Coca-Cola, and most recently, Sony -- advertising its game-playing, movie-playing, music-playing PlayStation Portable -- have bought wall spaces and hired graf artists to spray-paint on them as a part of their marketing campaigns.

In the beginning, it was mostly folks in the inner cities, black and brown faces, who wrote on walls and subway cars to make a mark, claim *something* as their own, says Ferrell. Today, it's everyone, black, white, brown and yellow, rich, poor and middle class, trying to leave *personal* logos in streets full of *corporate* logos. Trying to stick out. Take John Tsombikos, aka "Borf," the 18-year-old self-described anarchist from affluent Great Falls who indefatigably wrote his tag all across the District. Last week, he was sentenced to 30 days in D.C. jail and to pay \$12,000 in restitution.

Ecko has never heard of Borf.

"I'm not defending what this Borf guy has done, but I could empathize. . . . This selfish kind of journey of wanting notoriety. This desire: I have nothing. I want people to know me," Ecko says, taking another bite of the apple. "Look, I've been everywhere. When you travel the world and ride subway cars or trains in major cities, you realize that graf has become the universal language of teen angst and teen culture. It's cool. It's not just a black thing. It's very eclectic. It's for the hip-hop crowd. It's for the skateboarding crowd."

He was that kid in Lakewood, N.J., who, unlike his black and Latino friends, couldn't rhyme or break-dance to save his life. But, hey, he could tag. He kept a black book, the sketchbook of graf artists, carrying it with him at all times, drawing, experimenting, finding his style. He never considered himself a graf artist -- he wasn't good enough to be a graf artist, he says -- but through his designs, he's continually adopted graf's motif and aesthetic.

"Ecko is respected in the underground graf community. They know he's been around. They know he's for real," says Ferrell, the graf historian and author of "Crimes of Style: Urban Graffiti and the Politics of Criminality." Graf is at a critical moment, warns Ferrell. Is it staying true to its roots, a product of the counterculture, proudly rebellious and illicit? Or is it being co-opted into the cultural stockpile of this multimedia world, and all of a sudden you can play it on the TV screen?

"It's going to be interesting how authentic graf artists view this game, especially since it's coming from Marc," says Ferrell.

* * *

The game called "Getting Up" -- graf lingo for getting your work up on something -- has been in the works for seven years.

It was Ecko's creation -- "my graffiti opus," he says, "a love letter to all the taggers out there" -- from the very beginning. Trouble was, many game publishers who year in and year out churn out the latest versions of hit franchises ("Madden NFL" the biggest among them) and depend on tried-and-true titles ("50 Cent: Bulletproof" and "Grand Theft Auto: San Andreas" are basically cousins) didn't know what to do with a graffiti game. Innovative as it is, the game industry, much like the film, music and television industries, also plays it safe, Ecko discovered. Electronic Arts, the publishing giant, home to "The Sims" and "The Lord of the Rings" titles, passed. Thanks, but no thanks.

Ecko is still bitter about the rejections. "There was a lot of 'You're not looking at how buyers are reacting to what's selling'; 'You don't know what you're talking about,'" he says of the game publishers he met with. Finally, Atari Corp., the company that brought us "Pong," signed on to publish "Getting Up."

"This game for me is a wake-up call," says Bruno Bonnell, chief of Atari. "It's saying, 'If our industry wants to sell \$50 of the same old soup -- the same thing, the same experience -- we'll alienate potential consumers and we'll end up being really troubled.'"

"Getting Up" is set in the fictional city of New Radius, derivative of New York, where a young Dominican named Trane, who's considered a "toy," or beginner, by other graf artists, tries to make it as All City King, the most reputable of all graf artists. (Trane, by the way, is short for Coltrane, as in John. Ecko is a jazz buff.) Trane meets other graf writers throughout the game who serve as his mentors, and these mentors -- Cope2, FUTURA and T-kid 170 among them -- are real-life graf artists, all friends of Ecko. But the story forces Trane to duke it out with rival crews, fight the corrupt mayor and the city's Civil Conduct Keepers, all the while working to reach the "heaven spots" -- areas so high up that if you fall, good luck. In the game, the player wields a spray can the way the player of a first-person shooter game uses a gun. A well-placed tag brings respect and fame all over New Radius.

Is Ecko Trane? Is the regime Bloomberg's? Is the game promoting illegality? (Dennis Butler of the D.C. Department of Public Works, who manages the three two-man crews that clean up graffiti in the District, is not looking forward to its release. "I don't want to have to chase the kid who's gonna learn about graffiti from this game," says an exasperated Butler.)

Ecko says no to all three.

"Trane is a composite of many characters -- graf artists and non-graf artists -- that I've known, you know, over the years. The story is fiction. It's not some sort of tirade against Bloomberg," Ecko says, furrowing his brow. "Look, I own property, I'm not into the idea of someone coming in and spray-painting on my property." He shares a palatial two-story villa in Bernardsville, N.J., with his wife and their two toddlers: Sage Isabella, 3, and Alexander Jazz, 18 months.

"Is William Golding's 'Lord of the Flies' a brilliant narrative or not? After all, it is taught to high school kids all across the world. A story about alpha-male-dom. A story about kids killing kids," Ecko continues. "What if William Golding never told that story by way of a book? What if it was a video game? 'Getting Up' is just a game."

Not for long. MTV Films is now developing a big-screen adaptation of it.

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Graffiti Facts

24 Hour Graffiti Hotline	375-3461
Miami-Dade Police Non-Emergency	595-6263
Crime Stoppers	471-TIPS
Team Metro Hotline	375-5656

- [What is graffiti vandalism?](#)
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- [How can I volunteer my services for graffiti paint-outs or adopting-a-wall within your neighborhood?](#)

What is graffiti vandalism?
Graffiti vandalism is a form of expression attributed to the Hip Hop movement or subculture that includes inscriptions, symbols, nicknames, or graffiti pictures painted and drawn on walls, fences, vehicles, signs or other property, without prior permission from a property owner. Graffiti vandals attempt to gain fame through these acts.

 [TOP](#)**What effect does graffiti have on your neighborhood?**

Graffiti decreases property value and is a visible lack of respect toward other people's property. Graffiti attracts a criminal element, while pointing out that the area is controlled by criminals.

 [TOP](#)**Are all styles of graffiti illegal? What is the punishment for graffiti?**

Yes, all graffiti is illegal in Miami-Dade County. If convicted, the vandal will be fined, may face jail time, forfeiture of property used for the crime, community service hours, and parents of the offender may be liable for damages.

 [TOP](#)**How can I prevent graffiti from taking over my neighborhood?**

The best way to deter graffiti is to paint it out as soon as it appears. Become actively involved in your neighborhood Crime Watch and report graffiti to your local police station so that they may conduct surveillance of these acts.

 [TOP](#)**How do I report graffiti on signs, buildings, concrete poles, fences, walls, or other items in my neighborhood?**

To report graffiti in your neighborhood, call the Team Metro Regional Office nearest to you or the 24 hour Graffiti Hotline at 375-3461. If you find that your property has been vandalized with graffiti, call the Miami-Dade Police Department non-emergency number at 595-6263 and file a police report on the incident.

 [TOP](#)**Are there rewards given for information that leads to the apprehension of a graffiti offender?**

Yes, the Graffiti Reward Program is operated in conjunction with Crime Stoppers of Miami-Dade County, Inc. The purpose of the program is to reward anonymous tipsters whose reports lead to the apprehension of graffiti vandals. Call 471-TIPS to report your anonymous tip. You may be eligible for a reward of up to \$500.00.

 [TOP](#)**How should I go about stopping someone from spraying graffiti if I catch them in the act?**

For your personal safety, do not approach or try to stop a graffiti vandal in the act of tagging. Call the Miami-Dade Police non-emergency number at 595-6263 to report the crime. You may also call Crime Stoppers at 471-TIPS.

 [TOP](#)**How can I protect my property from graffiti?**

You can deter graffiti by using surface coatings, graffiti removal products,

or simply paint over the graffiti. Plant climbing vines or shrubs on the wall or structure to permanently cover and beautify the surface at the same time.

 [TOP](#)

Can I receive reduced price or free paint to cover graffiti on my property?

Yes, for a courtesy list of graffiti abatement products or a list of paint companies which offer free or reduced price paint with a notice of graffiti violation, call the Team Metro Regional office nearest you or the 24 hour Graffiti Hotline at 375-3461.

 [TOP](#)

What vines or plants can I plant to prevent my property from being a target for graffiti?

Ficus, Poinciana, Bougainvillea, Passion Flowers, Thunbergia, Stephanotis and Allemande will grow quickly and adhere to walls and fences. Planting of these vines and shrubs can prevent your property from being a graffiti target.

 [TOP](#)

How can I volunteer my services for graffiti paint-outs or adopting-a-wall within your neighborhood.

Team Metro will make every attempt to provide you with paint and materials for your activity, if available.

 [TOP](#)



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